

# Some Will Be Asked To Move For A Greater Public Good

While much effort has gone into locating projects of the Amended Draft Single Project to avoid the need to acquire private property, a relatively small number will need to be purchased for a greater public good. In order to reduce flood damages and the designated 100-year flood plain and provide a better and safer road network, approximately 46 homes and 44 businesses need to be acquired to provide the necessary public right-of-way for the open channel and roadways in the Amended Draft Single Package Phase 1 Projects. Many resident and business people have already

expressed a willingness to be acquired and relocated, while many others would prefer to stay.

"The toughest part for elected officials and city staff is acquiring people's homes and businesses that the owners and tenants spent many, many hard years to create and want to stay put," said Roger Figard, the Antelope Valley Project Manager and City Engineer. "Since the beginning of our democracy, government has had the power to acquire an individual's property for a public purpose provided that government compensates the

individual with a fair market value price. In addition to paying fair market value for an individual's property, state and federal laws require local government to pay these citizens for their relocation and moving expenses."

"Nevertheless, the disruption to people's lives and livelihood is great and we need to appreciate and do everything we can under the law to assist them," added Figard. "We ask them to sacrifice a great deal for the good of the bigger community. In this case, their sacrifices will allow over 800 residences and 200 business to be free of the 100-year

designated flood threat and provide a better road network that will reduce congestion, increase travel time and help abate inner-city blight for many, many citizens. It is an unfortunate consequence, but it is part of the democratic process and elected officials are given the responsibility for making those decisions on behalf of the whole community."

The Antelope Valley Plan includes relocating viable homes that would be acquired as part of the water and roadway onto vacant and fill in lots.



## Kansas City Project Provides an Example

When Lincoln backers of Antelope Valley need an example to illustrate their vision, they often use a flood control and redevelopment project 200 miles away. Kansas City has spent \$86 million to reduce flooding along Brush Creek, a drainage basin in the middle of the city that links such well-to-do areas as Country Club Plaza with poorer, inner-city neighborhoods. The roots of the flood-control project and related redevelopments date to one of Kansas City's worst tragedies. During heavy rains in 1977, Brush Creek filled with water and jumped its banks. The ensuing floods killed 25 people and caused about \$100 million in damage, much of it in Country Club Plaza, the expensive shopping area south of downtown. Afterward, the city and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers developed a plan to prevent similar tragedies.

In 1991, after years of discussion and voter approval of a \$50 million bond issue, the city began to deepen and widen the creek. Bridges were raised because the structures can act like a dam during heavy rains. More than a mile of Brush Creek has been changed to

reduce the chance of flooding, but another \$36 million in improvements for another mile are needed. Officials have yet to find the money.

But the improvements made so far are credited with doing what they were supposed to do: Saving lives and property.

Kansas City's last deadly flood occurred in October, 1998. Four to 6 inches of rain fell in a few hours. The downpour, made worse by suburban development and the city's rolling hills, caused floods that killed 11 people. In the improved areas of Brush Creek, the water swelled dramatically but stayed within its banks. Unlike 21 years ago, Country Club Plaza was spared.

Downstream areas that have yet to be improved were not so fortunate. A low bridge scheduled for replacement caused water to back up and flooded dozens of nearby apartments. Water spilled over a low bridge at another location and took five people to their deaths. The deaths and destruction prompted anger from some people who questioned whether the creek's improvements were made

first in the Country Club Plaza at the expense of poorer residents downstream. City officials replied that the Country Club area was improved first because that is where most of the damage occurred in 1977. And, they noted, the improvements have yet to be finished. "If we hadn't done these improvements, the October storm would have caused more damage than in 1977," Dennis McMann, a parks official, said during a recent tour of the area. "Even though it was less rain, it came in a shorter time. The improvements did the job here, but unfortunately they haven't been done farther downstream."

The water in Brush Creek is controlled by a series of dams operated by the city's Parks Department. On a recent visit, water along much of the creek had been drained to allow new construction as well as repairs from the October storm. Next to the Country Club Plaza, however, the creek remained an attractive waterway 3 to 8 feet deep. Water circulated by pumps flowed over the concrete liner that drops in stair-step fashion at one point to create a waterfall effect. Downstream, a foun-

tain sprays water 40 feet into the air. Sidewalks, extensive landscaping and bridges with pedestrian walkways add to the picturesque scene.

Private and nonprofit developers have joined the city in investing in the creek corridor. Multi-million dollar buildings are going up or are planned for the area, including the new headquarters for the Kaufmann Foundation, the Stowers Institute for Medical Research and an H & R Block service center. "None of this would be happening without the creek being improved because the infrastructure wouldn't be present," said Frank Ellis, chairman of Model Cities Health Corp., a nonprofit corporation that has built a \$21 million health clinic, drug treatment center and day care center near the creek. An affiliate housing development has started and there are plans for a shopping center and offices. In the past, the area had flooded every six to eight years.

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